DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 424 340 UD 032 603

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TITLE Mothers and Daughters Go to Work: The Relationship of Mothers' Occupations to Daughters' Career Aspirations.
INSTITUTION National Science Foundation, Arlington, VA.
PUB DATE 1998-04-17
NOTE 31p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (San Diego, CA, April 13-17, 1998).
CONTRACT RED-9550763
PUB TYPE Reports - Research (143) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Career Choice; *Daughters; Employed Parents; *High School Seniors; High Schools; Low Income Groups; *Mothers; Nontraditional Occupations; *Occupational Aspiration; Parent Child Relationship; *Parent Influence; Urban Youth
IDENTIFIERS Charlotte Mecklenburg Public Schools NC

ABSTRACT

This paper examines maternal influences on daughters' choices of occupations. Using a survey of high school seniors in Charlotte (North Carolina) as the primary data source, the career choices of adolescent girls and the influences of their mothers' occupations on their occupational expectations were studied. Previous research has suggested that working mothers do appear to influence their daughters' career choices. For this study, data from a survey of high school seniors were used, with the females extracted from a sample of 1,850 seniors. Findings suggest that there is little overall relationship, in the aggregate, between mothers' occupations and daughters' occupational aspirations. The young women surveyed were very optimistic about their futures, and most (84.2%) aspired to professional jobs. Among these students, mothers were well represented in the female professions, but most were in the study category designated "Sales, Technical, Administrative Support (Clerical)." Daughters of mothers with female-gendered occupations were more likely to aspire to female-gendered occupations than were daughters of mothers with gender-neutral or male-gendered occupations. Although these young women have high occupational aspirations, the occupational structure probably has not changed sufficiently to accommodate these high hopes. Their mothers are very aware of the discrepancies between their career aspirations and what they may ultimately do for a living. (Contains 1 table, 2 figures, 4 endnotes, and 36 references.) (SLD)

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# Mothers and Daughters Go to Work: The Relationship of Mothers' Occupations to Daughters' Career Aspirations

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Paper presented at the meetings of the American Educational Research Association, San Diego, CA, April 17, 1998. This research was supported by a grant to the first author from the National Science Foundation (RED-9550763).

UD032503

## Mothers and Daughters Go to Work:

## The Relationship of Mothers' Occupations to Daughters' Career Aspirations

"Like father, like son . . .," "Like mother, like daughter . . ," "The apple doesn't fall far from the tree . . ." All of these cliches contain the kernel of truth that says, simply, that parents influence their children, whether consciously or unconsciously, positively or negatively.

This paper is an examination of maternal influences on daughters' choices of occupations. Using a survey of high school seniors in Charlotte, NC as the primary data source, we investigate the career choices of adolescent girls and the influence of their mothers' occupations on their occupational expectations. We will examine patterns of young womens' expectations to see if contemporary young women continue the patterns of previous generations. That is, do young women continue to aspire to gender-typed occupations? And, do race and class differences exist in their patterns of career selection?

### Women's Labor Force Participation, Occupational Attainment, and Education

Shortly after the turn of the century, women's participation in the U.S. labor-force began steadily to increase while men's began to decrease. Near 1970, the rate of women's participation in the workforce began to resemble that of men. As of 1996, 56 percent of women sixteen years and over were in the civilian labor force, while 70.9 percent of men sixteen and over were. (Department of Labor, 1997).

While there *has* been an increase in womens' participation in the labor force as a whole, and a corresponding increase of women entering the professions, most women remain clustered in low paying, low prestige jobs. Women who pursue education beyond high school continue to fill the traditional, gender-segregated "semi-professions" for women -- nursing, teaching, and social work.

Among women, important racial/ethnic and class differences and cohort patterns exist. To illustrate, African-American and other minority women have higher rates of participation in the work force than their white, middle-class counterparts (Amott 1996), and upper-class white women tend not to work outside the home, except as volunteers (Ostrander 1984). Even

though African-American women are well-represented in the semi-professions, they tend to work in the public sector -- city, county, state, and federal governments -- where there is less racial discrimination but also lower salaries (Higginbotham 1994).

[Figure1 - African-American and White Women in Work Force]

Even when women are able to attain the "elite male" professions (medicine, law, high-level management) a type of gender stratification occurs. Most female physicians are family practitioners, pediatricians, and internists (the low end of of the M.D. pay scale). Female attorneys tend to take up domestic law and related issues or legal aid; few are in high paying corporate positions (Sokoloff 1992). And, a woman's presence in a large, corporate law office may be misleading. Here, women often perform routine, supportive tasks such as research and document preparation, not the high visibility, high compensation litigation. (Scott 1996).

Several generations ago, a major factor that shaped young women's occupational expectations was their limited educational attainment. However, since about 1970, U.S. women's educational attainment has equalled that of men, and in many ways, surpassed it. Overall, women are more likely to graduate from high school and college, and obtain M.A. degrees than are men. The gender gap in professional degrees (M.D., D.D.S., J.D., and Ph D) is closing, although there are the important inter-speciality distinctions noted above. And, men continue to dominate in engineering, and the physical and natural sciences, while women are more likely to be found in the social sciences and humanities ( U.S. Department of Education 1996)

Moreover, Marini and Fan (1997) recently found that differences in educational attainment explain less than 3 percent of the gender gap in salary that exists as young people begin their work lives. Margaret Andersen in Thinking About Women, gives us this to consider: " . . . even controlling for level of education, experience, and number of hours worked per week, women still make less money than men . . . " (Andersen 1997).

If educational credentials cannot explain differences in occupational attainment, it is necessary to look beyond schooling for causes. The process of gender role socialization and

the larger opportunity structure in a given historical period[1] are likely areas. This paper, then, looks at mothers' influence, as role models in gender socialization and as incumbents of certain occupations, on their daughters' occupational aspirations.

## Previous Research

The influence that a mother's occupation may exert on her daughter's selection of a career is a relatively new area for social researchers. Little is known about *any* effects, not just occupational, that mothers exert on the career aspirations of their children. Until quite recently, most of the data about mothers, when collected at all, have been subsumed under the label "parents." And, much of the research in the area of parental influence referring to "youths" actually has been on the effects of *fathers'* occupations on *sons* (Gaskell 1992; Duncan, Featherman, and Duncan 1972; Sewell and Hauser 1975).

One finds few empirical studies about effects of maternal employment on children's choice of career, fewer still that focus exclusively on mothers and daughters. Many scholars debate the effects of mothers' work-force participation on student achievement and cognitive abilities in general. Milne, Myers, Rosenthal, and Ginsburg (1986) found a negative effect of mothers' employment and living in a one-parent household on student achievement, but Heyns and Catsambis (1986) offered a critique of that work. Countering with a model that included structural, attitudinal, and socioeconomic determinants of mothers' employment, they found fewer negative effects of mother's employment on student achievement.

Kalmijn (1994) explored the effects of mothers' occupational status on children's school attainment (i.e., how many years of schooling children complete). He found that, in dual-earner families, a mother's occupational status affects her child's schooling, independent of fathers. As a mother's SEI score (occupational prestige and employment) increased, so did the likelihood that her child would graduate from high school, enter college, and obtain a Bachelor's degree.

Addressing the paucity of research on the influence of mothers' occupations, Kalmijn postulates that it may be explained by three things: 1) Economic and educational similarities

between husband and wife which suggest that variables for both may be highly correlated (thus making it difficult to make attributions of causality); 2) Researchers did not consider gathering this type of data worthwhile before the current high level of participation of women in the labor force; 3) Until recently, many large national information surveys did not query *mothers'* occupations, possibly due to women's sporadic entrances into and exits from the labor force before 1970.

Mothers are not the only ones who have been shortchanged in research about the connections among parents, children, education, and work. Jane Gaskell (1992) points out that what we have come to accept as common knowledge about "youths" is actually based on research that was carried out on boys only, with results and generalizations extended to girls. Fortunately, this has begun to change; no one can discount the rising participation of women in higher education and the work force, nor the differences between the experiences of men and women in both.

The research that exists about the effects of mothers' occupation on daughters' aspirations for occupations seems to fall into two opposing lines of thought: 1) There is *little* connection between mothers' occupations and daughters' aspirations because today's young people of both sexes have very high, and perhaps unrealistic, expectations for their work careers; it appears that they do not wish to replicate their parents' positions in the current occupational distribution; and 2) There *is* a connection, and that a socialization process takes place, whereby young women learn their gender-roles and occupational possibilities from their mothers.

Girls' Career Choices

Just as there are divergent lines of thought about the effects of mothers' occupations on daughters' aspirations, there are contradictory themes in the research on young people's career choices. The first suggests that gender has little to do with the career choices of young women or young men. For example, despite well-documented gender gaps in the occupational structure in this country, data from the Sloan Study (1997), conducted by

scholars at the University of Chicago, suggest that gender-segregated and low-paying jobs are not what today's high school students anticipate for their futures. This national study looks at adolescent attitudes and habits, including their aspirations toward and expectations about work. A preliminary analysis of recent data shows that teenagers are wildly optimistic about their career/job possibilites. Fully one third of the respondents aspire to professional jobs, while the proportion of their parents --people currently in the work force -- in professional jobs is much lower (Bidwell, Csikszentmihalyi, Hedges, and Schneider 1996). Their optimism is ironic considering the restricted opportunity structures that these young people will face upon entering the job market. Most of the growth in jobs is in the *service* industries, where low wage, low prestige jobs abound (Weis 1990). The young people's career optimism also suggests that neither parent's occupation is influencing children's occupational aspirations, at least not in terms of children consciously modeling themselves after parents.

The second line of thought is that gender role socialization *does* influence young women's career choices. Prompted by her earlier research in 1986, Gaskell asks why young women, intentionally or not, tend to reproduce their mother's sex-typed occupational roles. The young, working-class Canadian women she interviews demonstrate some of the ways that young women constrict their occupational decisions, and do not seek high responsibility, high paying jobs. They limit themselves occupationally by assuming the major burden of family and domestic life. Somehow, they have internalized, despite the women's movement, that their true role is as wife and mother, and they accept the limited career options that result from this "choice." Still, the girls experience some ambivalence about their choices, which emerge, "... not merely from some abstract principle of what *should* happen, but from an assessment of the way the world works, *what opportunities are open, what paths are possible*" (1992:90, my emphasis).

Along this same gender socialization path, Holland and Eisenhart (1990) followed groups of young women in two southern colleges: 1) middle- to upper-middle-class white women, and 2) working-and middle-class African-American women. They uncovered a

tendency in *both* groups, regardless of race and/or social class, to downscale their originally high career aspirations. The young women were selected for this study because they came to college with aspirations for lucrative careers in science and technology. Over the course of their college years, they seemed to lose interest in their original plans for college and careers and became preoccupied with that most traditional concern for young women: personal relationships. They gradually jettisoned their original intentions of pursuing fields that required a great deal of concentration and determination. Hence, the title of Holland and Eisenhart's book which documents this study: Educated in Romance. Romance, relationships, and families assumed primary importance for these girls instead of their original high-prestige, high-responsibility career plans. The young women who *were* able to remain focused on their original goals were the ones who found an area of study that thrilled them and/or a mentor to guide their enthusiasm.

Perhaps Jane Gaskell had some sort of mentoring or conscious role modeling in mind when she concluded, from her aforementioned study of young, working-class Canadians, that "...any attempt to give young people a sense of their own agency in the world, to show them that the world is constructed through a series of political and personal actions that might be changed, involves not just talking to them, but also showing them that conditions can indeed be altered..." (Gaskell 1992: 90).

Shu and Marini (1998) hypothesized that the women's movement would, in contrast to Gaskell's findings above, influence the types of careers to which young women aspired. They compared two birth cohorts from the National Longitudinal surveys of Labor Market Experience: Men and women born 1944-54, (the 1966-68 cohort) and men and women born 1957-65 (the 1979 -- post-women's movement -- cohort). They detected an increase in girls' pursuit of male-dominated occupations, as measured by the percentage of female incumbents. Young men's career choices changed little from the 1966-68 cohort to the 1979 cohort. But, for young women, both African-American and white, a change in occupational aspirations was noted, with the 1979 cohort showing an increase in the prestige and earning potential of

desired jobs. The most predictive variable, in this analysis, was the amount of parental education, with the girls of more highly-educated parents, regardless of race, seeking jobs with higher income potential.

Mothers' Influence on Daughters' Career Aspirations

Jacqueline Simpson (1997) studied girls who had formulated educational and career plans beyond high school. She considered a mother's influence on the choice of her child's college major, concentrating on the child's selection of technical vs. business and liberal arts majors. The results of this multi-variate study illustrate the complex equation of the mother and child relationship, whatever aspects are under scrutiny. Simpson compared her data to other research in which mother's education had been disaggregated from "parents" and found mother's education to be the *least* useful factor in predicting child's choice of college major.

However, she found mother's *occupation* to have an indirect effect on the selection of a college major. Mothers' occupational prestige seems to affect the number of math and science courses that children take in high school, which affects their choices of college major. Simpson suggests that, rather than considering only mothers' educational attainment and occupational status as they impinge upon their children's choices, future study should delve into mothers' emotional and normative effects on their children's status attainment.

In fact, in an analysis of interviews with middle-class African-American young women in California, Velasco (1997a) found emotional and normative effects of mothers on their daughters to be notable. The young women articulated that their mothers were their role models; they wanted to follow their mothers' examples of successfully combining work and family.

African-American women have always had a higher rate of labor force participation than white women, so there is a tradition of work for young African-American women to follow (Dill 1986, Mickelson 1989). It is the *types* of work that many of the young women in Velasco's analysis chose that so closely reflected their mothers' work experiences. While the small sample was not random, findings are suggestive of a connection between mothers'

occupations and daughters' aspirations for occupations, at least for young middle-class African-American women.

In 1997, Velasco interviewed mothers who had participated in Take Our Daughters to Work Day, an annual event sponsored by the Ms. Foundation for Woman. It is designed to expose young girls, aged nine to fifteen, to the world of work, and to encourage them to think about future career possiblities. This age group is chosen because of recent literature (Brown and Gilligan 1992; Pipher 1994) which cite this age as a time when girls experience a drop in self-esteem that seems to correlate with reduced academic interest and performance. Presuming that this phenomenon could affect the type of jobs that young women aspire to and eventually attain, the Ms. Foundation chooses to address it head-on (Ms. Foundation 1995). [2]

The mothers that Velasco interviewed came from a tradition of working women: their mothers and, in some cases, their grandmothers worked. It makes sense that they wanted to pass this on to their daughters. When asked why they participated in Take Our Daughters to Work Day, the mothers responded with words like "choices," "options," and "opportunities." These are things they want for their daughters. Two examples are found in Velasco (1997b):

> " . . . I was originally a single mother and have always had a focus on making sure my daughter knows what her choices are because, looking back on my life, I think I made a lot of decisions only because I didn't know what my other choices were . . ." (Jessica, a 32-year-old African-American woman).

> " . . .It was very important to me that they also have opportunities for non-traditional careers . . . Most of the women in our area fill the traditional jobs of women (nurses, secretarial, clerical), so it was very important to me that my daughters got to see that there were other careers and options for them . . ." (Julia, a white, divorced woman from rural NC, the mother of two daughters.)

Shu and Marini (1998) considered an area which is relevant to our current study: the effects of mothers' *job type* (whether female/male dominated) on daughters' occupational

aspirations. They found a notable gender-linked change in the 1979 -- post-womens' movement -- cohort of girls in their study. Specifically, the *sex-type of mother's occupation* had no effect on the 1966-68 cohort, but it positively affected daughters' occupational aspirations in 1979, when, the sex-atypicality of mothers' jobs positively affected the sex-atypicality of daughters' aspirations. Shu and Marini conjecture that the women's movement in the late 1960's and 1970's precipitated a different cultural awareness of women in the work force which, in turn, magnified gender-linked role modeling for some of these young women. If Mother occupied a less-female dominated occupation, Daughter would tend to aspire to such.

Choice Collides With Gender Roles and Opportunity Structure

But, is gender-linked role-modeling a sufficient explanation for the occupational decisions that young women make? Merrilee Krysa Finley in "The Educational Contest for Middle- and Working-class Women: The Reproduction of Inequality," probes the mother-daughter link and, unlike Velasco's African-American mothers and daughters, the process that she examines is an unconscious one. She looks at the ways that gender and class affect young middle- and working-class white women's decisions about education, occupations, marriage, and motherhood, and she analyzes how social inequalities are reproduced across generations. She says, "Research already tells us that middle- and working-class women [of the same generation] will have lives more like their own mothers' lives than like each others' . . . " (1992: 225). Finley asked these girls, just of out high school, where they expected to be in five years. Eighty-one percent of the middle-class girls expected to attain college degrees. When interviewed five years later, 77 percent of these had achieved their goal or were within a year of doing so. Among the working-class girls, 62 percent had expected to get their college degrees. At the five-year point, only 34 percent of these had fulfilled their goals.

Finley reasons that the middle-class girls had families who could offer financial assistance and career guidance to help them achieve their goals. The working-class girls were limited, not only financially, in making their dreams come true; they, and their parents, lacked the skills and resources to turn their dreams into reality. In the same sense, the "problem" of

gender is exacerbated for working-class girls because, often, if working-class families do have some financial resources for education, they are alloted to sons (Finley 1992). Finley's work suggests an interplay between social class and role modeling of mothers that guides young women's career decisions.

Mother as Work Force/Home Model?

When Mickelson, in 1986, interviewed 70 young adults who had previously participated in her 1983 survey of seniors in nine Los Angeles area high schools, she was interested in the relationship between human agency and social structure, especially how the intersection of race, class, and gender affects a person's educational history. She, accordingly, assigned each interviewee to a particular cohort based on race, class and gender. [3] Velasco (1997a) analyzed the cohort of middle-class African-American young women.

When these young women were asked who influenceed them, they frequently identified their mothers. Velasco found that, while most of the young women seemed to be on good terms with both parents, a pattern of an intense identification with Mother emerged. A couple of the girls mentioned warm relationships with their fathers, but most of the mother-daughter relationships were special. All of these girls loved and respected their mothers, but, more important to this current study, they *admired* them and seemed to wish to *emulate* them, too.

Most of the girls, even one who had an extremely difficult relationship with her mother, held up their mothers as role models -- "*She's* the most successful person I know." They not only admire what they view as their mothers' success in the workplace, but they model themselves after her in this particular way: there is no question about combining work and family. Middle-class white girls expressed conflict with this (Nutting and Walker 1997) but middle-class black girls have witnessed their mothers as "super-Moms." Each of the girls in this cohort aspired to recreate her mother's lifestyle: family and work.

Bonnie Thornton Dill (1986) suggested that African-American women have a long history of combining work and family. Mickelson, in "Why Does Jane Read and Write So

Well?" pointed out that " . . black families have historically been characterized by flexible gender roles . . ." which may account for African-American mothers being comfortable and effective in the breadwinner role (1989).

In contrast, Stephanie Shaw (1996) found the gender roles of the middle-class African-American women that she studied were as rigidly prescribed as their white counterparts. She interviewed three generations of African-American professional women who grew up after the Civil War, but before the second World War and the Civil Rights movement. In her comparison of their childhoods and professional lives, Shaw discusses the fact that "most black women historically had to work in both spheres . . . the model of womanhood held before the children was one of achievement in both public and private spheres . . . (29). Though they were professional women -- probably at the highest career levels attainable for them at the time -- they still were responsible for cooking, cleaning, sewing, caring for children and elderly relatives. " . . . each women had to devise a strategy that would allow her to fulfill personal, family, and community roles within her particular situation . . ." ( 113).

That philosophy still dominated in 1986, as the African-American "super-Moms" in Velasco's study continued to be ultimately responsible for the domestic work in their homes; After a day of performing their "public" jobs, they came home to work their "second shifts" (Hochschild 1989). Some of the fathers may have "helped out," but mothers made the domestic decisions, especially in terms of the children. (1997a)

It seems that women, of all colors and classes, are still "keeping the homefires burning," and girls continue to model themselves after their mothers as they are socialized into traditional gender roles. This directly affects the educational and career choices that some young women make (Finley 1992, Gaskell 1992, Mickelson 1989), while other young women appear to be unaware that family and caretaker roles will have any influence on their "professional" lives.

Some young women seem to be very aware of the connection between their mother's choices and possibilites and their own. The following comment is from Mickelson's interview with a middle-class, African-American young woman. She is from a two-parent family:

> **M.:** Well, how come all blacks don't "just go to school?"
>
> **L.:** Money. See, like my mother can afford to send my sister off to college and pay $10,000 a year when a majority of black mothers can't do that. So, really, if your *mother* don't have it, you won't either . . ." (emphasis mine).

## Research Questions and Hypotheses

We will consider the importance of mothers in daughters' socialization, in terms of gender-roles and occupational attainment and aspirations. The previous research indicates **1)** a reproduction of family structure (Gaskell 1992, Mickelson 1989, Finley 1992), **2)** the gender segregation of the opportunity structure (Sokoloff 1992, Rothman 1998), **3)** the influence that working mothers appear to have on their daughters perceptions of women in the workforce (Shu & Marini 1998, Velasco 1997a), and **4)** the relative absence of previous research on the question of the effect of mothers' occupation on daughters' aspirations for occupations. Several research questions come to mind:

Q1: To what occupational levels do contemporary young women aspire?

Q2: Is there a relationship between mothers' occupations and daughters' aspirations for occupations?

Q3: If so, do racial and social class patterns exist in these occupational aspirations?

These questions lend themselves to the following hypotheses:

**H1**: Daughters of mothers with gendered (female) occupations are more likely to aspire to gendered occupations than are daughters of mothers with gender-neutral or male-gendered occupations.

**H2**: Racial patterns are evident, such that the effects of mothers' gendered occupations will be stronger for African-American daughters than for white daughters.

## Methods and Procedures

To investigate the topic of maternal influences on daughters' occupational aspirations, we used Mickelson's 1997 High School Student Survey as the primary data source.

**Survey Data Set.** Mickelson's data set utilized a number of sources to construct a data set containing school-level and individual-level variables. The first source was the survey of high school seniors. The Project Team of the Business Leaders and School Reform Project fielded the survey during April, May, and June, 1997. Next, using Charlotte-Mecklenburg School System identification numbers of students who took the surveys, student achievement, school histories (transcripts, absences, special programs), and family background data were extracted from school system files and matched by ID numbers with student survey responses. Finally, CMS district records provided indicators of school-level variables for all schools.

**Sample.** The sampling frame employed for this current project was a list of all 1996-1997 secondary English classes, stratified by track, that were offered each period of the school day. English classes were used because English is the only subject in which all students must take a course each year. A 50 percent random sample, stratified by track (distinguished by course name), was drawn for every secondary school. A total of 1,850 high school seniors from the 11 main high schools and two special high schools participated in the survey. A comparison within each school of the racial composition of students who participated in the survey with the overall student body's composition indicated identical distributions by race within schools. The research reported here focuses on the high school senior females that were extracted from that sample of 1,850.

**Gendered Occupational Typology.**

In this research, we focused on the student-level variables of mother's occupation and daughter's aspiration for occupation. Students were asked to write in blank spaces on the survey form their mother's occupation and to identify their own occupational aspiration(s). Responses were assigned numeric values from the 1980 Census Code and 1989 Nakao-Treas prestige scores ( Nakao and Treas 1994). The Census Codes provided ordinal

categories, into which the responses were arranged. The six main categories of the census codes are: Managerial and Professional Speciality Occupations; Technical, Sales, and Administrative Support Occupations; Service Occupations; Farming, Forestry, and Fishing Occupations; Precision Production, Craft, and Repair Occupations; and Operators, Fabricators, and Laborers.

Because of the study's focus on gender-role socialization and its influence on occupations, sex-typed occupational categories were created from the original detailed census codes (in which each occupation is identified by a number). This system is based on Sokoloff's (1992) grading of "elite male-dominated" professions (includes lawyers, physicians, some scientists, some engineers), and "male-nonelite" professions [4] (includes accountants, clergy, some college teachers). Sokoloff's hierarchy continues with the categories "gender-neutral" and "female-dominated " jobs in the professions and technical work. We extended this system, using some of Rothman's (1998) descriptions of gender segregation in clerical and blue-collar work, into the remaining census categories. Because there were so few aspirants to the fifth category (Precision Production, Craft, and Repair) and sixth category (Operators, Fabricators, and Laborers), we decided to collapse the two into one category, which we called "Blue Collar."

Sokoloff delineated gender concentration by using a benchmark of under 20 percent female incumbents to define the "male-elite," and "male-nonelite" professions. For both professional and technical categories, 20.1 - 60 percent was labeled "gender-neutral," and 60.1 - 100 percent was labeled "female-dominated." She used 1970 U.S. (Department of Labor) Detailed Census Categories to analyze 1960 and 1980 census data (Sokoloff 1992).

In our initial analyses, we found these category markers to be inadequate because of changes in the work force since 1970. Women, increasingly, have penetrated what was once "an old boys club;" that is, the elite professions, but new "old boys' clubs" internally stratify the professions even as women enter them in increasing numbers. Once within the male

professions, many women continue to perform the less prestigious, less financially rewarding tasks.

Because of this, a floor of 20 percent fails to distinguish the more lucrative "male" professions from the "gender-neutral" professions. We believe the distinction, still, is theoretically pertinent. Consequently, using data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (1997) to determine the percentage of females in occupations, we updated and extended Sokoloff's definitions for dividing, by gender, the other census occupational categories. Based on this data, we set the limit for "male" occupations at below 30 percent female incumbancy. "Gender neutral" categories have between 30.1 percent and 60 percent female incumbents, and "Female" occupations have above 60 percent female incumbancy.

Students' occupational aspirations and their mothers' occupations were arrayed into census categories based on their original census codes and the percentage of women in each particular occupation as determined by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (Jan. 1997). This was done for the entire sample, "All girls," which includes, African-Americans, Whites, and "Others." We call this adapted and extended scale "The Gendered Occupation Typology."

## Findings

As is common when trying to collect this type of information, the problem of missing data diminished our sample. In many cases, respondents chose not to answer or did not know about their mothers' occupations, and/or were undecided about their own occupational aspirations. Often their aspirations were unclear as in, "something to do with children or animals," or the descriptions of their mothers' occupations were vague, which nullified them for purposes of comparison; for example, "My mother works at I.B.M."

Many young women included multiple answers for their career aspirations. In such cases, we selected their first response to use in our comparisons. If the first choice was not clear or we could not find a matching census code, we moved to consecutive answers. We, also, tried to match their expected levels of education with their aspirations. Because we

aimed for consistency in this process, we, unfortunately, lost some pertinent data (which may be used in future analyses). For example, often the second or third choice was obviously related to mother's occupation. One girl gave four possible occupational choices; the fourth was "secretary," which perfectly matched her mother's occupation, perhaps to say, "If all else fails . . ."

[Table 1 here]

**Table 1** presents mothers' and daughters' occupational choices as distributed in the Gendered Occupation Typology, in terms of "All," "African-American," and "White" mothers and daughters. Categories Four and Five (from the Census Code) will not be discussed because our sample has so few represented in these categories. Some mothers occupy these positions, but no daughters aspire to them.

Several key findings are salient. Most of the mothers' currently-held occupations and daughters' aspired-to occupations are in the first two main census categories: 1. "Professional," and 2. "Sales, Technical, and Clerical. **.7** percent of "All Mothers" in our sample occupy "Male-elite" jobs--doctors, lawyers, etc. **18.1** percent of all Daughters aspire to this category. The rate is higher for African-American girls (**21.7** percent) than for white girls. There is no representation of mothers in the "Male Non-Elite" Professions, and little for daughters.

In the Gender-Neutral Professions, **16.2** percent of Mothers hold these types of jobs; **30.7** percent of Daughters aspire to such. There is a large increase in this category. More than twice as many daughters aspire to these occupations as mothers currently occupy them. **37.1** percent of White and **20.9** percent of African-American girls aspire to Gender-Neutral Professions.

Although the change is not as great as in the previous professional categories, there is still a rise in the percentage of girls who want to be Female Professionals -- nurses, teachers, social workers, etc. In fact, it is still the largest category. **12.8** percent of African-American Mothers are in Female Professions; **33.7** of African-American Daughters want to be. **31.5**

percent of White Mothers are in Female Professions; **33.6** percent of White Daughters want to be.

There is little representation in the Male-Sales, Technical, and Clerical category, more in Gender Neutral S/T/C. In the **Female Sales, Technical, Clerical** category, **34.5** percent of All Moms currently occupy this type of job; only **4.6** percent of Daughters want to. The rate of African-American girls aspiring to Female Sales, Technical, and Clerical jobs is more than twice that for White girls.

The **Service** categories are interesting: The numbers are hardly worth considering, except **Female Service.** Note that the rates for Mothers and Daughters of each race are similar, but the occupancy and aspiration rates of African-Americans in this category is over twice that of whites: **10.1** percent of African-American mothers hold these jobs compared to **3.6** percent of white mothers; **9.2** percent of African-American daughters aspire to these jobs compared to **3.8** percent of white daughters.

(Figure 2 here)

**Figure 2** shows how the distribution across occupational categories has changed between the two generations: Daughters want to be professionals! **84.2** percent of young women aspire to professional jobs. Note how few Mothers are professionals, other than the "Female Professional" category, which includes nurses, teachers, social workers. We must remember that the Mothers' graph shows actual occupations while the Daughters' graph shows what the girls hope to do with their work lives.

## Discussion and Conclusion

We began our literature review by discussing the lack of research that focuses specifically on the effects of the mother-daughter relationship on daughters' career paths. What research there is falls into two lines of thought: a broad area that considers mother's influence in normative terms--sex-role modeling--which influences the kinds of occupations that young women choose for themselves; and the recent Sloan Study, which indicates that young

people in general are very optimistic about their employment futures, and, overall, do not use the examples of their parents' occupational lives as a basis for their occupational aspirations.

Our findings, at this point, are suggestive that there is little overall relationship, in aggregate, between mothers' occupations and daughters' aspirations for same. In this, we seem to be in agreement with the Sloan Study. Our young women are very optimistic about their futures and most of them aspire to professional jobs. While mothers are well-represented in the female professions, most of our mothers are, not surprisingly, in the Sales, Technical, Administrative Support (Clerical) Category. The Sloan Study found that one third of their sample, which included males and females, aspired to the professions. Our rate for those aspirations, at least among young women, is considerably higher: 84.2 percent aspire to professional jobs.

In this stage of our investigation, we focused on our first hypothesis: Daughters of mothers with female-gendered occupations are more likely to aspire to female-gendered occupations than are daughters of mothers with gender-neutral or male-gendered occupations. As a first step, we compared mothers and daughters in aggregate, not mother:daughter pairs.

Our preliminary results allow us to think of the mothers and daughters as two cohorts of women without any familial attachments or influences, and to look merely at how the desirability of certain occupations has changed over time. In the future, will examine mother:daughter pairs, try to isolate possible race and class effects, and test whether particular maternal occupations exert more influence on daughters' aspirations than others.

We must remember that we are comparing *actual* occupations with *aspirations* for occupations. Although daughters seem to be very optimistic about their career destinations, mothers, as in Velasco's(1997b) interviews with the Take Our Daughters to Work mothers, are very aware of the discrepancy between girls' career aspirations and what they ultimately do for a living. We know that the occupational structure has changed, but probably not enough to accommodate the high hopes of the young women in our study. It will be interesting to see what occupations these young women attain.

## Notes

[1] The historical context is important because it affects the kinds of opportunities that are open to women at a particular time and for a specific reason. "Rosie the Riveter" comes to mind. During WWII, women were needed to fill occupations outside of the home that were normally filled by men--who were otherwise occupied. The work had to be done, so it became not only "socially acceptable" but morally-dictated and patriotic for women to fill jobs that were traditionally reserved for men. Because of a nursing shortage during the same time period, black nurses, who had previously been restricted to black hospitals and clinics, were welcomed, with open arms, into white hospitals ( Shaw 1996).

[2] In Fall, 1997, as part of an assignment to interview social activists, Velasco interviewed two mothers and a mother-daughter pair who had participated in the Ms. Foundation's "Take Our Daughters to Work Day." Each interview was taped, but confidential, and conducted face-to-face, except for one telephone interview. In her analysis of the transcripts of the interviews, she discovered that all of the mothers described experiences in their own work lives that led them to want "better" for their daughters. These mothers saw themselves as agents-of-change. This small study helped inform the current analysis of mothers, daughters, and work.

[3] Mickelson interviewed young people who had participated her 1983 survey of seniors in nine Los Angeles area high schools (at total of 1800 seniors). The purpose of these unpublished interviews was to allow the individuals to articulate, in their own "voices," the role of education in their lives and how they had created their own personal educational histories. Mickelson was interested in the relationship between human agency and social structure in various adolescent subcultures.

[4] Sokoloff distinguishes between "male-elite" and "male-nonelite" to illustrate the differences between the two in terms of prestige, autonomy, and financial reward. In American society, "Male-elites" (doctors, lawyers, some scientists) have higher prestige, more autonomy, and usually greater financial reward than other occupations.

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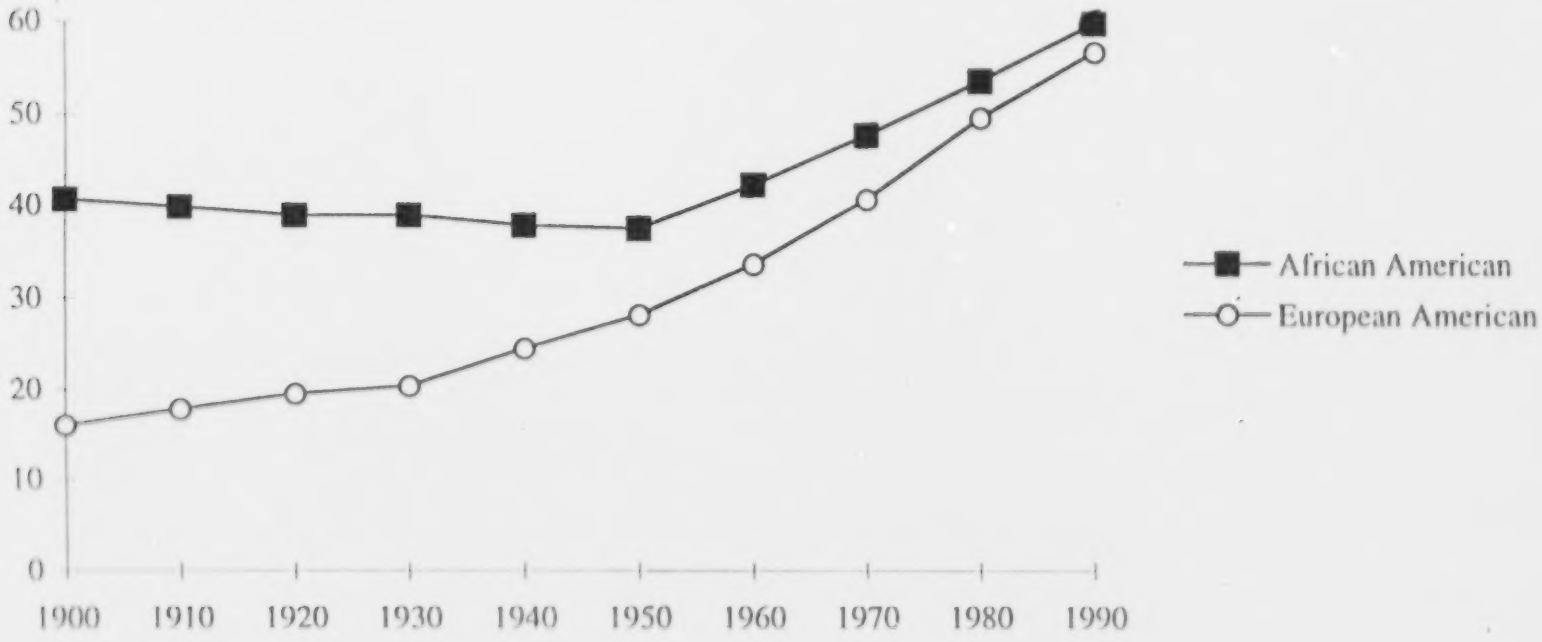
**Figure 1** Labor Force Participation Rates of African American and European American Women, 1900-1990




NOTE: For details on definitions of the variables for different years and for data used to construct this figure, see Appendix C.
SOURCE: See Appendix A.

**(Amott and Matthaei 1996, p. 166)**

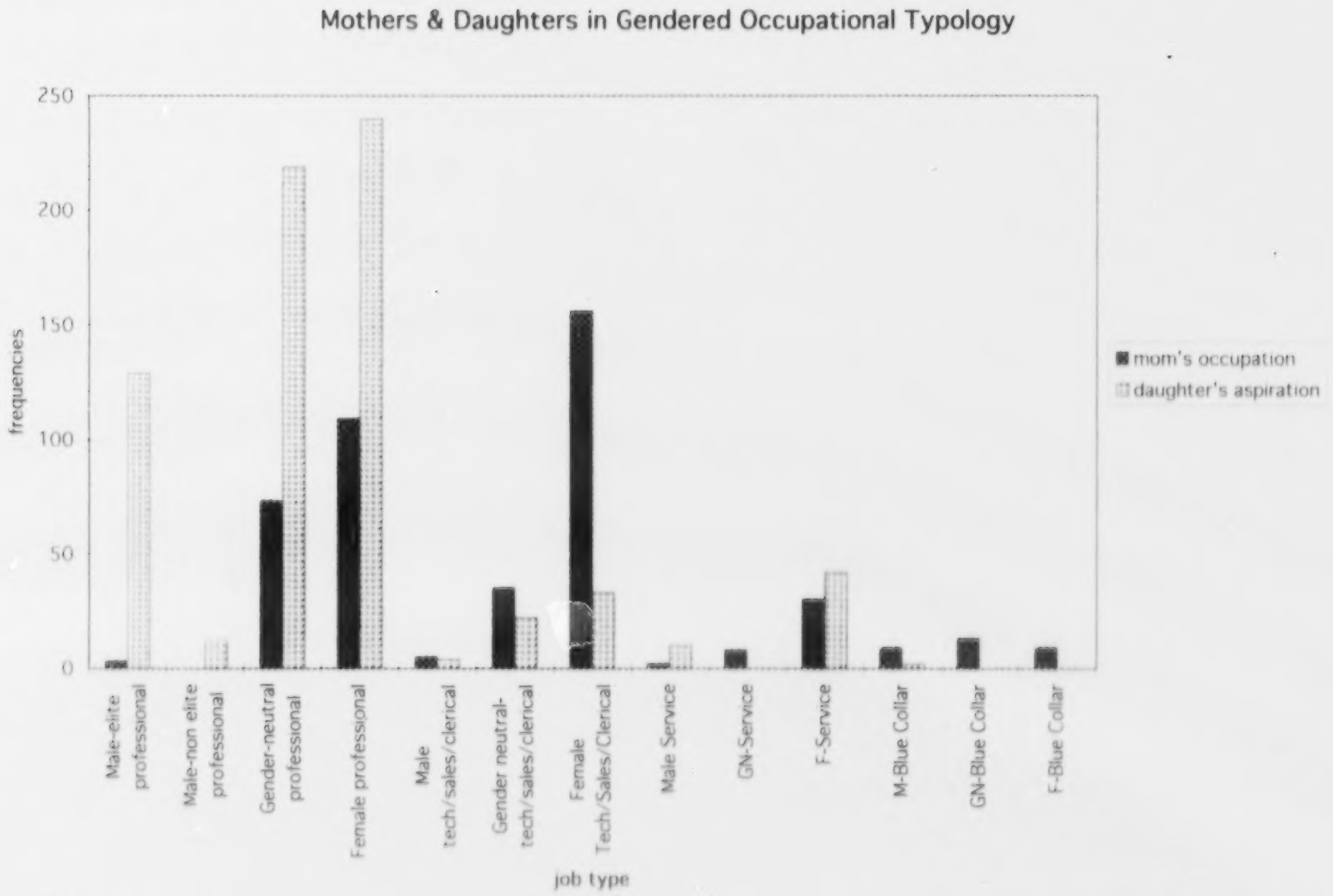
**Table 1** **Preliminary Distribution of Female Students' Occupational Aspirations and Mothers' Occupations in *The Gendered Occupation Typology***

| Occupational Category (examples) | All | | African-American | | White | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Mom Occ. % | Daughter Occ. Aspir. % | Mom Occ. % | Daughter Occ. Aspir. % | Mom Occ. % | Daughter Occ. Aspir. % |
| 1.10 Male Elite Profession (doctors, lawyers) | .7 (3) | 18.1 (129) | 2 (3) | 21.7 (54) | - - | 15.4 (65) |
| 1.15 Male Non-Elite Profession (Some scientists, engineers) | - - | 1.7 (12) | - - | .4 (1) | - - | 2.4 (10) |
| 1.20 Gender Neutral Profession (Veterinarians, some college profs) | 16.2 (73) | 30.7 (219) | 16.8 (25) | 20.9 (52) | 16.7 (46) | 37.1 (157) |
| 1.30 Female Profession (Nurses, teachers, social workers) | 24.1 (109) | 33.7 (240) | 12.8 (19) | 33.7 (84) | 31.5 (87) | 33.6 (142) |
| 2.10 Male Sales/ Tech/Clerical (Elec. Techs, pilots) | 1.1 (5) | .6 (4) | 1.3 (2) | .8 (2) | 1.1 (3) | .5 (2) |
| 2.20 Gender Neutral Sales/Tech/Cler (small business owners) | 7.7 (35) | 3.1 (22) | 6.7 (10) | 4.8 (12) | 8.3 (23) | 2.1 1(9) |
| 2.30 Female Sales/ Tech/Clerical (LPN's, sales clerks) | 34.5 (156) | 4.6 (33) | 33.6 (50) | 6.8 (17) | 35.5 (98) | 3.3 (14) |
| 3.10 Male Service (Police) | .4 (2) | 1.4 (10) | 1.3 (2) | 1.6 (4) | - - | 1.4 (6) |
| 3.20 Gender Neutral Service (Janitors, cleaners) | 1.8 (8) | - - | 3.4 (5) | - - | 1.1 (3) | - - |
| 3.30 Female Service (Hair dressers) | 6.6 (30) | 5.9 (42) | 10.1 (15) | 9.2 (23) | 3.6 (10) | 3.8 (16) |

**Table 1- continued:** ***Gendered Occupational Typology***

| Occupational Category | All | | African-American | | White | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Mom Occ. % | Daughter Occ. Aspir. % | Mom Occ. % | Daughter Occ. Aspir. % | Mom Occ. % | Daughter Occ. Aspir. % |
| 4.10 Male Fish/Farm Forestry | - | .3 (2) | - | - | - | .5 (2) |
| 4.20 Gender Neutral Fish/Farm/For | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 4.30 Female Fish/ Farm/Forestry | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 5.10 Male Blue Collar | 2.0 (9) | - | 3.4 (5) | - | 1.4 (4) | - |
| 5.20 Gender Neutral Blue Collar | 2.9 (13) | - | 6.0 (9) | - | - | - |
| 5.30 Female Blue Collar | 2.0 (9) | - | 2.7 (4) | - | .7 (2) | - |
| | 100 (452) | 100 (713) | 100 149 | 100 249 | 100 276 | 100 423 |

Figure 2


Mothers & Daughters in Gendered Occupational Typology
250
200
150
100
50
0
frequencies
mom's occupation
daughter's aspiration
Male-elite professional
Male-non elite professional
Gender-neutral professional
Female professional
Male tech/sales/clerical
Gender neutral-tech/sales/clerical
Female Tech/Sales/Clerical
Male Service
GN-Service
F-Service
M-Blue Collar
GN-Blue Collar
F-Blue Collar
job type